

Safe Native American Passengers (SNAP) Course at the Phoenix Indian Medical Center

The Indian Health Service Office of Environmental Health & Engineering (OEHE) once again collaborated with the Phoenix Indian Medical Center (PIMC) Public Health Nursing Program to debut the Safe Native American Passengers (**SNAP**) Course for transporting children safely at the Phoenix Indian Medical Center. The training and child safety seat check-up event was held in conjunction with the Substance Abuse Health & Wellness Fair and Easter egg hunt. Ten people attended and completed the 12-hour course (8-hour lecture followed by a 4-hour hands-on installation of car seats) held at the Behavioral Health Department conference room on April 8th. On Friday, April 9th, course participants completed their training by participating in a child safety seat check-up at the northwest warehouse parking lot where parents/guardians who brought their children and car seats to the event learned how to properly install their car seats in their vehicles, or obtain car seats if they did not already have one.

In all, **10 child safety seats were inspected** for recalls and proper installation. All but one of the seats brought in to the checkup event had been installed incorrectly. Approximately **10 child safety seats were provided** to those who brought in seats that were damaged, on the recall list, or did not properly fit their child. The child safety seats were provided at NO COST to the families. Caregivers and parents who visited the check-up event were taught how (as tight as possible) and where (in the back seat) to properly install their child safety seats; encouraged to read their vehicle and child safety seat instructions; and found out whether or not their child safety seat had any defects by checking the latest recall list. The training, check-up event and car seats distributed were provided free of charge to those who visited the check-up station.

Child Safety Seats: the National & Native American Perspective

Native American children ages 1-9 die from motor vehicle crashes than from any other cause nationwide. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates that as many as 30,500 children under 5 years old annually are injured in motor vehicle collisions. In 1997, for instance, of the 604 children who died in motor vehicle crashes, about 420 would have survived had they been properly restrained (Sachs and Tombrello 2000). In car seat "check-up" events nationwide, including Native American communities, estimates show that up to 95% of car seats are improperly installed or used by caregivers. Issues and reasons often encountered and cited at these check-up events include non-use of car seats, incompatibility of car seats and vehicles, and the challenge of changing behavior patterns.

Studies show that the use of vehicle occupant restraints such as seat belts and child safety seats cut down injury severity by 60%, hospital admissions by 69% and treatment costs by 66%. Using a seat belt and using child safety seats properly have been proven to save lives!



A scene from the child safety seat check-up station held at PIMC.



Students learning how to identify the location of tether anchor points inside vehicles. Child safety seat tethers, when properly anchored, provide a more secure fit to seats.



Students during the hands-on exercise activity.



Greg Lorenz, Director of Public Health Nursing, teaching SNAP students how to properly install an infant seat.



Valerie Oney, Madeline John, & Ralphine Archie learning how to identify child safety seat errors and misuse.



Cathy Flame-Ayatta, Delbert Thomas and Madeline John getting ready to check a child safety seat.



A child safety seat inspected at the PIMC check-up event on 04/09/04. The seat was improperly installed (seat belt routed incorrectly). Parents were advised and taught to re-install this seat correctly.



PIMC SNAP students during the de-briefing after the check-up event.

The Law

All 50 states, including Arizona, have child safety seat laws in place. In Arizona, children under 5 years old transported in vehicles must be properly restrained. Drivers not complying with the State regulation are subject to a \$50 fine (first offense) if stopped by law enforcement authorities. Arizona is one of 34 states that require children under 16 years old to be covered under safety belt or child restraint laws. Some Tribal communities have adopted State safety belt and child restraint laws, or have developed their own laws.

The Right Way to Install Child Safety Seats

Selecting and installing the right child safety seat can be a daunting task for parents and caregivers. With hundreds of types of child safety seats available in the market and even more vehicles on the road to install the seats in, it is easy to see why parents and caregivers have such a hard time installing child safety seats correctly. Fortunately, design improvements continue to be made by manufacturers based on recommendations by NHTSA and other safety advocates. The advent of the LATCH system (**L**ower **A**nchors and **T**ethers for **C**hildren), for instance, gives caregivers a safe and more secure alternative to installing child safety seats beyond the vehicle's seat belt system.

For more information about how to properly install child safety seats, contact the Tribal Police Department, Health Center or IHS Office of Environmental Health & Engineering. The following web sites also provide excellent information about child passenger safety products and topics: www.NHTSA.gov, www.safekids.org, www.carseat.org, and www.nsc.org.

PROPER CHILD SAFETY SEAT USE CHART Buckle Everyone. Children Age 12 and Under in Back!			
	INFANTS	TODDLER	PRESCHOOLERS
WEIGHT	Birth to 1 year up to 20-22 lbs.	Over 20 lbs. – 40 lbs. and over 1 year	Over 40 lbs. up to 80 lbs.
Type of Seat	Infant only or rear-facing convertible	Convertible/Forward-facing	Belt positioning booster seat
Seat Position	Rear-facing only	Forward-facing	Forward-facing
Always Make Sure	Children to one year and at least 20 lbs. in rear-facing seats. Harness straps at or below shoulder level.	Harness straps should be at or above shoulders. Most seats require top slot for Forward-facing.	Belt positioning booster seats must be used with both lap and shoulder belt.
Warning	DO NOT place infants in the front passenger seat of cars with air bags.	All children age 12 and under should ride in the back seat.	Make sure the lap belt fits low and tight to avoid abdominal injuries.

SNAP Curriculum

The SNAP course curriculum was developed by a workgroup comprised of IHS and tribal injury prevention practitioners and advocates from the Phoenix, California, Aberdeen and Navajo IHS Areas and agencies (Desert Samaritan Injury Prevention Program). The 12-hour course was designed to introduce basic concepts of child passenger safety. The intended audience of this course is anyone who works in Native American communities and is interested in child passenger safety. Participants may include community health workers, public health nursing staff, Health Educators, EMS Personnel, Fire Personnel, Law Enforcement, Tribal Environmental Health Specialists/Practitioners, and Child Care Providers.

The training module hit the streets last summer and was distributed nationally to all IHS Area Offices.

Donated Car Seats

In the summer of 2002, the Phoenix Area Injury Prevention Program submitted for and received a major grant from Ford Motors Inc. for booster seats. The *Boost America Campaign* yielded over 1000 seats for the Phoenix Area Injury Prevention Program. Booster seats were distributed to tribes in the Area, including the Yavapai-Apache Nation (approximately 28 seats). All of the booster seats (high back and low back type) were distributed at the November 14th check-up event, including 8 to the Early Learning-Child Care Program.

Earlier in 2003, Greg Lorenz, PIMC Public Health Nursing Program Director, submitted and received a grant from IHS. Mr. Lorenz purchased child safety seats and check-up event equipment with the funds his program received. Along with being one of the main course instructors, Mr. Lorenz and the PHN program provided 10 car seats and check-up event equipment for the April 9th event.

Course Participants

The following individuals completed the course:

- Cathy Flame-Ayatta, Medical Clerk, OB Dept., Phoenix Indian Medical Center (PIMC)
- Corine Turner, Diabetes Prevention Program Coordinator, San Lucy
- Jual J. Lopez, PHN, PIMC
- Delbert Thomas, Transporter, PIMC
- Valerie Oney, Transporter, PIMC
- Roberta Seepie, Diabetes Prevention Program, Salt River
- Mary J. Hatala, RN, OB Dept., PIMC
- Heather Kennedy, OB Tech, PIMC
- Ralphine Archie, American Indian Prevention Council, Moms-4-Wellness
- Madeline John, Child Care Provider, Tuba City

Course instructors were all NHTSA-certified Child Passenger Safety Technicians. Instructors included: Greg Lorenz, PHN Director, PIMC; and Vincent Slayton Garcia, District Environmental Health Officer, Western Arizona District OEHE. Ms. Tomi St. Mars, Coordinator, Banner Samaritan Injury Prevention Program, assisted during the check-up event.

The Future

One of the goals of the SNAP course is to empower tribal community members and tribal programs interested in furthering their skills in child passenger safety. For instance, those who completed the course now serve as local resources with valuable skills to their community. Each person who completed the course now have the ability to recognize and correct some car seat misuse situations, can teach others about child safety seats, and can encourage parents to secure their children properly when traveling.

National Child Passenger Safety Courses in 2004

The 32-hour Child Passenger Safety Technician Certification Course will be offered to several Arizona Native American communities in 2004. The comprehensive course will be open to tribal community members interested in expanding their child passenger safety knowledge and skills. A tribal community member who successfully completes the Tech course will be able to teach the SNAP course, as well as serve as a valuable resource to the community! Courses currently available during the spring include:

Payson: April 13-16, 2004

White River: May 11-14, 2004

Camp Verde (Location TBA): May 25-30, 2004

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to CDR Carlos “Butch” Creamer, Safety Officer, PIMC, and the PIMC Security Department for helping us coordinate the event.

Special thanks to Mr. Greg Lorenz, Director of PHN, for his continued commitment to the Native American children and families. To Ms. Tomi St. Mars, IP Coordinator, Banner Samaritan Hospital, for her expertise and long-standing support of child passenger safety and injury prevention in rural communities.

And of course, to the 10 students who participated in the course and check-up event. Each demonstrated their commitment to their communities and child safety by completing the course and working hard at the check-up event. Their presence made the debut of the SNAP course at PIMC a success!

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